



## First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park Indian Education For All Lesson Plan

### Title

The Importance of Buffalo Culture to Blackfeet Indians

### Content Areas

United States History; Science; Social Studies; Writing

### Grade levels

11th/12th

### Duration

Five class periods

### Goals (Montana Standards/Essential Understandings)

**Essential Understanding 5:** There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have impacted Indian people and shaped who they are today. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods. Examples: Colonization Period and Treaty Period

**Essential Understanding 6:** History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

**Reading Content Standard 1:** Students construct meaning as they comprehend, interpret, and respond to what they read.

**Rationale:** Readers actively engage with text to build their own understanding. Thus, readers understand what they read as it relates to what they know. In this process, readers use prior knowledge and related experiences to: predict what a text might say and confirm or revise their understanding; integrate new information into their existing knowledge base; reflect upon what has been read in order to respond and create personal meaning through discussion and writing, as well as through artistic expression, formal presentation, media, etc. As readers construct meaning they interpret what they read, selecting important ideas and details.

**Benchmarks:** When reading, students will

1. Make predictions and describe inferences and connections within material and between new material and previous information/experiences.

**Writing Content Standard 1:** Students write clearly and effectively.

**Rationale:** The goal of writing instruction at all grade levels is to enable all students to write clearly and effectively. While final drafts should be mechanically correct, good writing includes much more: organization, development of ideas with supporting detail, sentence fluency, word choice, and voice. Writers need many opportunities to write and revise their writing. As writers gain control of language, they discover the power of writing to communicate.

**Benchmarks:**

Students will:

4. Apply conventions of standard written English (e.g., spelling, punctuation, usage) appropriate for grade level and purpose.

**Science Content Standard 3:** Students demonstrate knowledge of characteristics, structures and function of living things, the process and diversity of life, and how living organisms interact with each other and their environment.

**Rationale:** Students gain a better understanding of the world around them if they study a variety of organisms, microscopic as well as macroscopic. Through the study of similarities and differences of organisms, students learn the importance of classification and the diversity of living organisms. The understanding of diversity helps students understand biological evolution and life's natural processes (cycles, growth and reproduction). Structure, function, body organization, growth and development, health and disease are important aspects to the study of life. The study of living systems provides students important information about how humans critically impact Earth's biomes.

**Benchmarks:** Students will:

1. Identify and describe key factors (technology, competitiveness, world events, etc.) that affect the development and acceptance of scientific thought (e.g. the adaptation of Blackfeet Indians to EuroAmerican technology—the horse over the dog-pulled travois; steel knives and arrow points over stone; the gun over the bow; the iron pot over the ceramic; cloth over leather for clothing, etc.).

**Social Studies Content Standard 1:** Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.

**Rationale:** Every discipline has a process by which knowledge is gained or inquiry is made. In the social studies, the information inquiry process is applied to locate and evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources of information. Information gathered in this manner is then used to draw conclusions in order to make decisions, solve problems and negotiate conflicts. Finally, as individuals who participate in self-governance, the decision-making process needs to be understood and practiced by students as they prepare to take on civic and economic responsibilities.

**Benchmarks:** Students will:

1. Analyze and adapt an inquiry process (i.e., identify question or problem, locate and evaluate potential resources, gather and synthesize information, create a new product, and evaluate the product and process).
2. Apply criteria to evaluate information (e.g., origin, authority, accuracy, bias, and distortion of information and ideas).

3. Synthesize and apply information to formulate and support reasoned personal convictions within groups and participate in negotiations to arrive at solutions to differences (e.g., elections, judicial proceedings, economic choices, community service projects).

## Overview

In this lesson students will explore the following:

- The importance of the buffalo in the culture of the Blackfeet Indians, and the types of technology used by the Blackfeet people and other Indians to kill large numbers of buffalo;
- The treaties, laws, and presidential orders that shrunk the land base of the Blackfeet, and opened their lands to white settlement;
- The near extermination of the buffalo and the effect of this decimation on Blackfeet and other Plains Indians; and
- Students will demonstrate their knowledge of the contemporary history and culture of the Blackfeet, presently headquartered on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation at Browning, Montana.

## Materials or Resources Needed

Computer; Internet for students, working in pairs

*Killing Custer: The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*, pp. 25-47, by James Welch.

## Activities and Procedures

### Class period 1:

1. Break the students into small groups. Using computers and the Internet, the teacher will direct students to the following website: <http://www.trailtribes.org/greatfalls/home.htm>. This is the website of trailtribes.org, part of the Regional Learning Project at the University of Montana—Missoula.
2. In order to learn about the subsistence economy of the Blackfeet and their beginning transition to the capitalist economy, assign one of the following topics listed under the theme, *Traditional Culture*, to each of the small groups: “Since Time Immemorial,” “Homeland of the Blackfeet,” “All My Relations,” “Camp Life and Seasonal Round,” and “Buffalo Hunt.”
3. Students will prepare 5-minute group reports for class period 2.

### Class period 2:

1. Student groups give reports
2. Facilitate full class discussion, incorporating the information the students learned from the web pages.
3. Assigned reading before class: “*Killing Custer: The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*,” pp. 25-47, by James Welch. The book is available through Interlibrary Loan from Montana State University—Bozeman. Per U.S. copyright laws, one chapter from a published book may be copied without copyright infringement.

### Class period 3:

1. Using computers and the Internet, students will explore two treaties between the United States and the Blackfeet tribe or nation. These treaties are the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 and the Blackfoot [sic] Treaty of 1855. Students may access these treaties by going

to a search engine and typing in the word “kappler,” and the name of the treaty. Have the students read the treaties.

2. Have the students go to the website: <http://www.trailtribes.org/greatfalls/home.htm>. This is the website of trailtribes.org, part of the Life Long Learning Project at the University of Montana—Missoula. Have them learn about the treaty-period of Blackfeet and U.S. relations. Go to the section labeled, “Relationship with U.S.” and study the subsections labeled: “Before the Long Knives,” “The Long Knives,” “Making Treaties,” and “The Shrinking Reservation.”
3. Ask the students to work in their groups again and develop group presentations based on (a) the treaties, and (b) the Blackfeet perspective on the treaties as discussed on the trailtribes.org website. They need to incorporate answers to some of the questions listed below. The teacher will assign specific questions to each group:
  - In what context was this document created?
  - Why did the individual choose this form or medium?
  - What do the visual components of the text convey in terms of its meaning or status?
  - Who authored/created it?
  - For what purpose?
  - Under what circumstances?
  - Where did this document---e.g., article, art work, cartoon---originally appear?
  - What alternative interpretations might you offer based on this same document?
  - For whom did they create it?
  - What biases or other cultural factors might have shaped the message of this document?
  - Why are you looking at it now?
  - What question are you using this document to answer?
  - Is this document consistent with what we now know of the historical record from that time?
  - Whose point of view is this document representing?
  - What other perspectives are represented through other documents from this time or event? How does their story compare with that of the others?
  - What limitations---self-imposed or otherwise---might affect the validity of or ability to generalize beyond this information?
  - How can I verify the information in this document?
  - Are there perspectives that are not represented through these primary source documents? If so, who represents their story/experience—and why should I believe them?
  - How is this document interpreted today—and if differently than in the past, why?
  - What are the facts?
  - What are the opinions (if comparing the primary source document against a textbook or article written later)?
  - What criteria are most useful and appropriate to consider when evaluating the perspective or veracity of a primary source document?

#### **Class period 4:**

1. Students will present their group reports.

2. Assignment for class period 5: students REVIEW pages 24-47, chapter 2, *Killing Custer: The Battle of the Little Bighorn and the Fate of the Plains Indians*

### **Class period 5:**

This book chapter is a secondary historical source—that is, the chapter is the author’s opinion, or his interpretation, backed up by selected historical facts, some of which are found in primary documents, such as letters, treaty documents, government reports, newspapers, etc. Facilitate a full class discussion centered on some of the questions listed below:<sup>1</sup>

- What is the secondary source (a textbook, a biography, a non-fiction book about your topic, etc.)?
- Who is (are) the author(s)?
- What information can you get about the author(s)? (background, education, occupation, economic status, political affiliations, groups he or she belongs to, etc.)
- Who published the source?
- What did the author and the publisher have to gain by creating this source?
- When was this published?
- Are there any detectable biases that this source has? If so, what?
- What type of information does this source provide?
- Does this source give you all the information that you need to complete your project?
- What additional sources will you need in order to complete your research, if any?
- How will you use this source?

### **Assessment**

Using the primary and secondary sources, students will write a 1,000-word, or four-page, essay centered on the broad topic of “Blackfeet History and Contemporary Culture.” Students should use the resources discussed in these lessons, plus the official website of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation at the following URL: <http://www.blackfeetnation.com/>

Suggested Research Paper Guidelines may be found at the following website: Kentlake Schools, State of Washington, Language Arts Writing Skills Rubric—  
[www.kent.k12.wa.us/ksd/KL/culminatingproject/research.htm](http://www.kent.k12.wa.us/ksd/KL/culminatingproject/research.htm)

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<sup>1</sup> [www.mcps.k12.md.us/SCHOOLS/WJHS/depts/socialst/Media/secondary.html](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/SCHOOLS/WJHS/depts/socialst/Media/secondary.html)